

Two Can Keep a Secret —if one of them is dead

Suspended Sentences

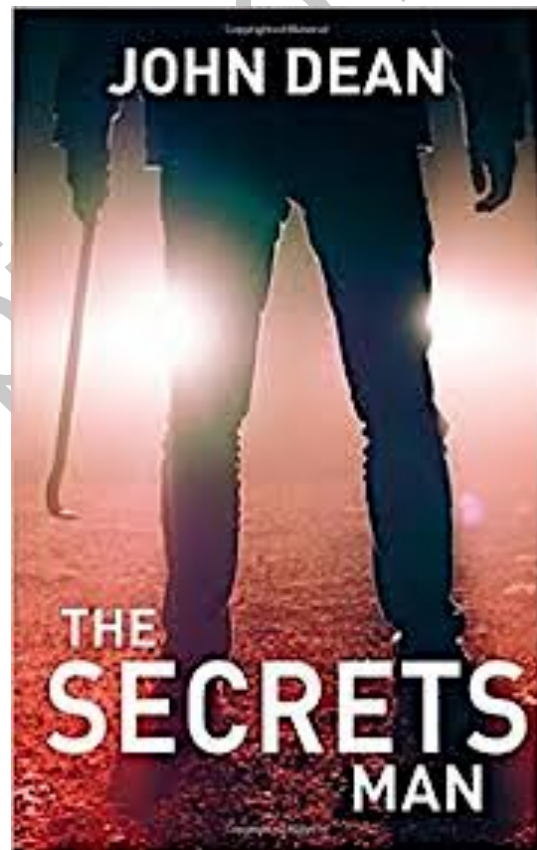
by Jim Napier

1 987, Hafton, in northern England. DCI John Blizzard is visiting former DCI George Moore, a retired colleague and mentor, in the hospital when he recognises an elderly man in a nearby bed. It's Harry Josephs, who had been closely linked to organised crime in the region. Never one to get his own hands dirty, Josephs was nonetheless known as The Secrets Man for his comprehensive knowledge of what went on in the local underworld. But age is a great leveller; now he's fighting an infection and lying in the ward next to an old adversary.

And according to Moore, he is confusing others in the ward for old cronies, and talking to them.

The hospital holds more than its share of memories for Blizzard. One floor above is Lorraine Hennessey, a seventeen-year-old woman lying in a coma. Having overdosed on drugs she's on life-support; but she's not been responsive for months, and is just days away from being disconnected from the machines that keep her nominally alive. Blizzard would

like very much to find those who put her in that condition and bring them to justice.



When Harry Josephs is visited by some of his old friends they soon realise that his babbling represents a danger to them. They attempt to return to solve the problem late one evening but are rebuffed by the floor nurse, who recognises one of them, and they are forced to

leave. But they are not put off so easily.

DCI Blizzard passes Josephs' bed, and the man calls out to him; he's mistaken the officer for a man named Des Fairley, an underworld figure who'd been murdered decades earlier. The crime had never been solved, and Blizzard sees an opportunity to bring down the head of the gang, Morrie Raynor. It's tempting, but as Blizzard will discover, the challenge is not without its dangers.

Scottish-based crime writer John Dean has sixteen novels to his credit to date, most of them featuring DCI John Blizzard, as well as others written as John

Stanley. Less well known in North America, his books are informed by his experience as a crime reporter and polished by his skills as a teacher of creative writing. *The Secrets Man* is a well-written police procedural, with a convincing cast of characters and accurate in its depiction of professional policing without slavishly focusing on forensic details, and building toward a compelling climax. Told from multiple points of view, the story widens the readers' understanding of the broad and lasting impact that crimes can have on those around them. Read one, and you'll go hunting for the others.

Reviewed by Jim Napier, August 2018.

Jim Napier is a professional crime-fiction reviewer and novelist based in Canada. His book reviews and author interviews have been featured in several Canadian newspapers as well as on such websites as *Spinetingler Magazine*, *The Rap Sheet*, *January* magazine, *Reviewing the Evidence*, *Crime Time*, *Shots Magazine*, *the Montreal Review of Books*, and the *Ottawa Review of Books*. His reviews can also be found on *Amazon.com*, and *Goodreads*, as well as on his own award-winning site, <http://deadlydiversions.com> His debut crime novel *Legacy* was published in the Spring of 2017, and the second in the series, *Ridley's War*, is scheduled for release in the Fall of 2018. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com